

This Week in Congress

March 8, 2010

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress."

EPA Ruling Threatens Kansas Economy

At the end of 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued regulations that would allow the agency to put limits on greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act, without the consent of Congress. In this potentially devastating ruling, the EPA classified carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases a danger to public health. In December, I was the first member of the House of Representatives to introduce legislation to overturn this rule. This week, I joined more than 90 of my colleagues in introducing similar legislation.

Allowing the EPA to move forward with this rule would have a devastating impact on the economy and job creation – especially in the agricultural and energy sectors. The legislation I support would invalidate the current EPA rule and prevent the EPA from proposing a similar rule, unless Congress passes a law authorizing such a regulation.

With today's unemployment rate near ten percent, the last thing Americans need is more regulation that would hurt job creation. The Clean Air Act was never intended to regulate greenhouse gases, and the EPA must be stopped from making decisions that circumvent Congress. [Click here](#) to learn more about this effort.

President Obama Plans to Push Health Care Reform Through Congress

President Obama announced this week that he wants Congress to agree to his health care reform plan in the next two weeks. To achieve his goal, Democrats in Congress will likely have to resort to a legislative procedure known as "budget reconciliation." This arcane legislative process will allow Democratic Congressional leaders to side-step the normal legislative process and pass a bill without broad support. I disagree with this decision and am disappointed that the President and Democratic leaders appear determined to pursue this legislative technique to claim a political victory.

History shows us that lasting change requires collective effort, shared responsibility and the support of the American people. Unfortunately, this process has spiraled into something much less. Health care is far too important an issue to address under arbitrary timelines and without broad support. [Click here](#) to read my ideas on health care reform.

Accepting Award from Command and General Staff College Foundation

This week, I met with retired Col. Bob Ulin, CEO of the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) Foundation of Fort Leavenworth. During our meeting, Col. Ulin presented an award in appreciation of my support for the Foundation's good work. For nearly 130 years, the CGSC at Fort Leavenworth has served as the "intellectual heart of the Army," educating our country's military leaders. The CGSC Foundation was created in 2005, as a non-profit educational foundation to enhance the military educational programs of the CGSC. The Foundation's success was recently acknowledged with a \$6.1 million pledge by Ross Perot for two new education initiatives. In December, I spoke to the House of Representatives to commend this generous gift and the Foundation's outstanding work. [Click here](#) to watch my comments.

The challenges facing our nation's military are great. It is an honor to support the work of the CGSC Foundation in developing our military's leaders to overcome these challenges and keep our country secure. [Click here](#) to see a photo from our visit.

Immigration Reform Caucus Puts Focus on Enforcement

I recently joined the Immigration Reform Caucus. This bipartisan group of lawmakers seeks to improve enforcement of our immigration laws and prevent legislation that would grant amnesty to illegal immigrants. While the attention of Congress is now focused on health care, immigration legislation may be addressed by Congress this year. Just two months ago, President Obama indicated he will support legislation that grants amnesty to illegal immigrants .

My first priority in immigration reform is to make sure our borders are secure. In addition to protecting the border, we also need to reform government bureaucracy to produce a fair and efficient immigration agency that encourages compliance with our laws. [Click here](#) to learn more about my thoughts on immigration.

USDA Announces Intention to Hold 2010 CRP General Signup

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack recently announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) intends to hold a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general signup. CRP conserves soil and enhances water quality and wildlife habitat by making annual rental payments to agricultural producers who enter ten to fifteen year contracts to plant and maintain vegetative cover on highly erodible farmland.

Secretary Vilsack said the USDA would release the start date of the general signup once it completes an Environmental Impact Study later this year. I am glad USDA made its intentions clear about the CRP program. Next year 4.4 million acres expire from CRP. It is important that farmers know whether they will have a chance to reenroll existing CRP acres before their contract expires.

Speaking to See-Kan RC&D Annual Meeting

I was in Fort Scott on Saturday, along with Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, to speak with members of See-Kan Kansas Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) at their annual meeting. See-Kan provides natural resource conservation and economic development leadership to citizens in eleven southeast Kansas counties. I enjoyed visiting with organization members and learning about the many good things See-Kan is doing to sustain our Kansas way of life. Thank you to President Ronnie Brown for the kind invitation.

Recognizing Tony Bell of Harveyville

On Wednesday, I visited with Tony Bell of Harveyville, who is the “2009 Great Comebacks” award recipient for the central region of the U.S. He was selected for this honor because of his perseverance and determination in the face of medical and physical challenges. Tony was born with a defect of his colon, and has endured several surgical procedures to help fix the problem. Following a successful procedure at age 9, Tony literally grabbed life by the horns and began riding bulls and pursuing his love for music. While attending college on a singing scholarship, Tony competed professionally in the rodeo circuit. Today, Tony is following in his parents’ footsteps to become a special education teacher, while working on the family farm. He also volunteers each summer at Youth Rally, a camp for adolescents facing similar medical conditions, to support and encourage campers.

I commend Tony for his achievements and for sharing his story so others with challenging medical conditions are encouraged to persevere and keep working toward their goals. [Click here](#) to view a photo from the visit.

Cooperation Needed to Build Better Communities and a Stronger Country

Prayer is a powerful thing. It has the ability to comfort and encourage. When practiced with others, it can unite individuals in common purpose. On Friday morning, I attended a prayer breakfast in Ottawa at Sacred Heart Church. I spoke to those in attendance about the need for unity as Kansans seek to build stronger communities and as Americans work to improve our country. Unfortunately, our nation’s leaders are too often divided and concerned more about scoring political points than working together to solve tough challenges. Leaders in Washington, D.C., can learn a lot from local leaders who roll up their sleeves and work together to make their towns better places to live. I encouraged those in attendance to continue their efforts to build

community in Ottawa. Thanks to Father Bill Fisher, Pastor Earl Zimmerman, Reverend Scott Dickinson and Blake Jorgenson for participating in this event.

Accepting Entries for 2010 Congressional Arts Competition

Art plays an important role in the lives of Kansans. As a member of the Congressional Arts Caucus, I am pleased to announce that I am now accepting entries for the 2010 Congressional Arts Competition. This annual event recognizes the artistic talents of high school students across the "Big First" Congressional District.

The Dodge City Area Arts Council will host the 2010 competition at the Carnegie Center for the Arts. This year's competition is divided into seven categories: paintings, drawings, collage, prints, mixed media, computer generated art and photography. All submissions must be received between Tuesday, April 6th and Friday, April 9th at the Dodge City Area Arts Council's Carnegie Center for the Arts. The results will be announced April 18th, at 2:30 p.m. during a reception at the Carnegie Center for the Arts. Awards will be given in each category, and the winning artwork will be displayed in the U.S. Capitol for one year.

I encourage all interested students to consider participating in this competition. If you would like more information about the 2010 Competition, please contact my Hays district office at 785-628-6401. [Click here](#) for more information about the 2010 competition guidelines.

In the Office

Kelly Gilbert of Kansas City was in with the Kansas City Regional Clean Cities Coalition Metropolitan Energy Center to discuss the coalition's clean fuel initiatives in Kansas. Ruth Ann Mullhatten of Wichita was in with the Business and Professional Women's Foundation to advocate for legislation that would help working women and their families. Jodi Mackey of Topeka, Hilary Hanvey of Hutchinson, Elaine Harris of Kansas City, Connie Vogts of Liberal and Cindy Jones of Olathe were in with the School Nutrition Association to tell me about the needs of school nutrition programs.

Kristin Bowman-James, Doug Byers, Michael Dunnaway, Patrick Freeland and Abigail Jones of Lawrence were in with the Kansas National Science Foundation Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research to update me on their ecological research projects. Susan Harrington of Manhattan and Connie Stewart of Topeka were in with the National Association of Foster Grandparent Program Directors to tell me about important volunteer opportunities for Kansans aged 55 and older.

Members of two veterans service organizations, the Kansas Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and Kansas American Legion, were in to share their views on a number of veterans' issues Congress is considering. Those issues include the need to improve disability claims processing, legislation I sponsored to repeal the Military Widows Tax and the Disabled Veterans Tax and ways to address veteran unemployment and homelessness. In with the Kansas DAV were

Christian and Christine Kramer of Topeka; Gary and Rene Prescott of Wichita; Clifford Dillard, Frank and Veronica Bergquist, Charles Lovings and Curtis and Yorkie Smith of Wichita; Jim and Ellen Price of Salina; and Daniel Fisher of Lawrence. In with the Kansas American Legion were Charles Yunker of Topeka, Dave Thomas of Leavenworth, John Thomas of Derby, David Warnken of Hutchinson, Lee Stolfus of Emporia, Jim Hawthorne of Wichita, Frances Swensen of Junction City, Sharon Spiker of Wetmore, Trish Ward of Louisburg, Myrna Rogers of Augusta and Elgin Wahlborg of Arkansas City.

La Veta Miller of Great Bend and Lee Ann Seiler of Jetmore were in with Central Prairie Research Conservation and Development to share information about the work of RC&D Councils in Kansas. Jim Hays of Winfield, Superintendent of the Kansas Veterans Home, stopped by to discuss legislation before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs that would affect state veteran homes.

Joan Barrett and Jeff McCausland of Wichita, Joe Jindra of Concordia, Kent Cornish of Topeka and Rich Wartell of Manhattan were in with the Kansas Association of Broadcasters to share their thoughts about radio performance tax proposals, emergency preparedness and spectrum use and distribution. Jessica and Bryce Coghill of Dodge City, Alicia Darnell and Madison Cline of Andover and Valerie Fairchild of Wichita were in with the Arthritis Foundation to express their support for research and treatment of pediatric arthritis.

Joe Davison, George Lucas, Jon Rosell and Kay Brada of Wichita, Craig Concannon of Beloit, Nancy Sullivan of Topeka, Jay Murphy of Olathe and Gary Baker and Jacque Amspacker of Shawnee Mission were in with the Kansas Medical Society to discuss issues affecting Kansas physicians and patients. Mary Reed Spencer of Alma and Kay Julian of Kansas City were in with the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Kansas to discuss treatment and research advances regarding multiple sclerosis.

J.D. Rein of Great Bend was in with the American Association of Homecare to talk about increasing access to medical care for Kansans who require medical care in their homes. Todd Fleischer, Mike Malone and Gary Robbins of Topeka; Steven Bryant of Concordia; Michael Hattan of Hays; and Traci Hanssen of Hutchinson were in with the Kansas Optometric Association to visit about eye and vision care in Kansas communities. Leon Wittman of Kansas City was in with Sizewise to discuss advances in medical equipment.

Jim Ludwig, Mark Ruelle and Mark Schreiber of Topeka were in with Westar Energy to discuss interstate electric transmission projects in Kansas and pending environmental regulations that would affect power generators. Julie Mulvihill of Topeka, Warren Hixson of Hutchinson and Shari Wilson of Kansas City were in with the Kansas Humanities Council to tell me about the many valuable projects the Kansas Humanities Council sponsors across our state. Trey Cocking, Andrew Werring, Karen Seaberg, Rick Berger and John Mitchell of Atchison were in to represent the City of Atchison to discuss their ability to replace their combined sewage outflow system.

Wally Kearns of Salina and Stan Compton of Topeka were in with the Kansas Small Business Development Center to tell me about the KSBDC's successful year and the need to continue improving our nation's small business environment. Sandy Procter of Manhattan was in with Kansas State University's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program to tell me about efforts to educate Kansans about healthy eating and good diets. Charlie Fletcher and Victor White of Wichita were in with the Wichita Airport Board to update me on the status of the construction of Wichita Mid-Continent Airport's new terminal building.

Representatives from the City of Salina were in to update me on a number of initiatives in the community. In with the group were Dennis Lauver, Luci Larson, Rita Deister, Brad Stuewe, Randy Duncan and Jason Gage. Members of the Kansas Association of Insurance Agents were in to discuss recent congressional actions affecting their industry, including health, flood and crop insurance, along with taxes on small businesses. In with the group were Kerri Spielman of Topeka, Cindy and Roger Hower of Holton, Mark Lowry of Stockton, Rick Elliott of Paola, Bob and Suzanne Wood of Parsons, Lou Smith of Wichita, Darin Schmitz of Seneca, Bob Fee of Hutchinson and Alastair Jones of Lenexa.

Donn Teske of Onaga was in with the Kansas Farmer's Union to talk about trade legislation and agricultural issues. Carol Frazee and Marian Bolz of Topeka were in with the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation to express support for rehabilitation programs and other wellness initiatives. Tawny Stottlemire of Topeka, Richard Jackson of Ottawa, Carolyn Ward of Johnson County, Jim Baze of Douglas County, Penny Houchin of Franklin County, Kenna Burns of Burlingame and Pat Kells of Lawrence were in with the Kansas Association of Community Actions Programs to update me on initiatives to address poverty in Kansas communities.

Several Kansans came by my Washington, D.C., office this week to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including Jeffery McCausland, Chris Thompson and Lou Smith of Wichita and Michael and Suzanne Bollig of Hays.

Contact Me

It is an honor to serve you in Washington, D.C. Please let me know how I can be of assistance. To send me an email, [click here](#) . You can also [click here](#) to contact me through one of my Kansas offices or my Washington, D.C., office.

Very truly yours,

Jerry